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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 002389

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: ABKHAZ CONTINUE TO BLOCK UN MISSION TO ASSESS
MONITORING IN KODORI, WHILE CHECHEN FIGHTERS JOIN PKF

REF: A. TBILISI 2305

[1](#)B. TBILISI 2043

[1](#)C. TBILISI 2170

Classified By: CDA Mark X. Perry, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On September 18, the Ambassador attended a Tbilisi meeting of the Group of Friends of the Secretary General, minus Russia, for a discussion of the situation in Abkhazia ahead of a planned Group of Friends meeting in Berlin on September 19. Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Jean Arnault told the Friends that

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Abkhaz de-facto president Sergei Bagapsh continues to deny access to a UN technical team seeking to assess deployment of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and artillery radar in the Upper Kodori gorge (ref.A). All of the Friends agreed that it was essential to tell the Russians and Abkhaz that it was unacceptable to block the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) recommendations to enhance UNOMIG capability in Upper Kodori. Arnault also said that UNOMIG has confirmed the presence of experienced Chechen fighters as part of the CIS peacekeeping force as has been previously alleged by the Georgian government. Arnault expressed rising concern as the time for a decision on Kosovo independence approaches. He said he would raise with the Friends in Berlin the possibility of urging the Georgians to make concrete proposals to the Abkhaz on what "fullest autonomy" within Georgia would mean. End Summary.

Bagapsh again denies access to UN team

[1](#)2. (C) Arnault told the Friends that Bagapsh has denied for a second time access to Abkhazia for a UN technical team to assess deployment of UAVs and artillery radar in the Kodori gorge. Both measures were recommended by UNOMIG following the March 11 incident in Kodori to monitor airspace in the Georgian-controlled valley. Arnault said that Bagapsh's refusal was troubling because both de-facto foreign minister Sergei Shamba and the Abkhaz MOD had recommended allowing the team in. He said Bagapsh's refusal implies that Bagapsh and the Russians do not want UNOMIG in Kodori. All of the Friends agreed that it was essential to tell both the Russians and the Abkhaz that it was unacceptable to block the UNOMIG recommendations to enhance UNOMIG capability in the Kodori gorge. German Ambassador Flor said she thought the Western Friends should send a broader message on Abkhazia to the Russians, as conflict seemed to be looming by the end of the year. All agreed. The French Ambassador said that he had heard the talking points prepared for French FM Kouchner's September 18 meeting with Russian FM Lavrov in Moscow warned that France would consider recognizing Chechen independence if Russia recognizes Abkhaz independence. The

French Ambassador said he did not know if Kouchner had actually used that talking point.

UNOMIG confirms Chechen fighters among CIS PKF

13. (C) Arnault told the Friends that UNOMIG has confirmed the presence of experienced Chechen fighters among the ranks of the CIS peacekeepers. (Note: Chechen support is believed to be an important factor in the Abkhaz victory in the 1992-93 war against Georgia.) UNOMIG's finding validates earlier Georgian allegations that Chechen fighters are involved in the the CIS PKF. UNOMIG military commander General Khattak had discounted these allegations when they were first made by the GOG.

Arnault to urge Georgians to offer Abkhaz concrete proposals

14. (C) Arnault said he would raise with the Friends in Berlin the possibility of urging the Georgians to make concrete proposals to the Abkhaz, spelling out in some detail what "the fullest autonomy" actually would mean. He said that it may be too late, but thought that an upcoming October meeting in Uppsala, Sweden between the Georgians and the Abkhaz could be a forum for discussing such a proposal. Arnault said that Shamba told him that he expects that within six months of Russian recognition of Abkhaz independence, Russia will ask the Abkhaz to request incorporation into Russia. He seemed to think the Abkhaz have a reason to work with the Georgians, although he said he did not know if they still had freedom to maneuver (as evidenced by Bagapsh's refusal to allow UNOMIG to expand its capabilities in the Upper Kodori). Arnault said that he was concerned that President Saakashvili would find his hand forced by events, should Russia or the Abkhaz attempt to take control of the Upper Kodori or force Georgians out of Gali in an ethnic

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cleansing campaign. He quoted Saakashvili as saying that Georgia could not stand by if Georgian refugees started streaming across the Enguri river again.
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